

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10 IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15

16 TITLE: BUSINESS METHOD FOR  
17 MEMORIALIZING VEHICLE PURCHASE  
18 TRANSACTIONS  
19

20 INVENTORS: GERALD LACOUR, GARRETT LACOUR,  
21 ROBERT CORBIN and MATT NOWICKY  
22  
23

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of The Invention

The present invention relates to business methods, and business methods in the vehicle sales area in particular.

2. Background Information

The vehicle sales arena is an area in which allegations of fraud and unfair sales tactics are rampant. The combination of aggressive sales staff and often unsophisticated purchasers is a volatile combination which often leads to claims against dealerships under the states' various consumer protection statutes and regulations.

Specific sources of dealership and customer conflicts include, among other things, such things as the total cost for a vehicle, the added costs for after-market products and warranty protections, the duration and scope of manufacturer's warranties, perceived promises as to performance or features of the purchased vehicle, the affect of credit given for trade-in vehicles on the ultimate purchase price of the subject vehicle, and the requirements for enrolling in, or

1 making claims under add-on warranty programs (window etching,  
2 alarm system warranties, etc.).

3 When disputes arise between dealerships and customers,  
4 they often descend to the level of a "swearing match" between  
5 the "big bad car dealer" and the "poor victim customer."  
6 Regardless of the actual facts, and what the customer was told  
7 (often times, multiple times), the dealership loses in court,  
8 or at least undertakes an expensive defense with no possible  
9 remedy when the truth prevails.

10 For the above reasons alone, it would be beneficial to  
11 provide, not just some manner for recording the interchange  
12 between sales staff and vehicle purchase customers, but to  
13 provide a recording system which produces substantially  
14 indelible records which are easily retrieved when needed.

15 In addition to providing protection for dealerships in  
16 the legal context, such a transaction recording system will  
17 enable supervisors to critique and train sales staff with  
18 respect to their demeanor and presentation when dealing with  
19 customers, as well as assure that all things within the staff  
20 member's responsibilities are being fulfilled (the offer of  
21 after-market programs and products, for example).

22 Further still, such a transaction recording system will  
23 actually protect customers in many cases. The stress of a

1 major purchase, the frustration of unrealized expectations,  
2 and merely the passage of time can all contribute to flawed  
3 memory. A customer may well, honestly believe that one thing  
4 was promised, or another was never revealed, only to find out,  
5 when viewing the recorded transaction, that memory has played  
6 a trick. Such a customer will then avoid the costly and  
7 embarrassing experience of seeking legal relief against the  
8 dealership, only to find out that there was never a case.

9 In view of the foregoing, it would well-serve the vehicle  
10 sales industry and its customers alike to provide a business  
11 method and associated apparatuses which would allow the  
12 recording, the substantially indelible archiving, and easily  
13 operated cataloging of recorded transactions between sales  
14 staff and customers.



1 produces catalog data associated with each transaction  
2 recording which allows the recording to be readily located and  
3 played at a subsequent time.  
4

5 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

6 The components involved in carrying out the subject  
7 business method can be categorized into two major  
8 classifications: hardware/equipment and proprietary software.

9 Hardware:

- 10 • Wired Digital Video Camera or Wireless Digital  
11 Video Camera/Digital Video Receiver  
12 • Audio microphone  
13 • CD-R, CD-RW, DVD-R, or DVD-RAM drive  
14 • Customary cables which allow for interface between  
15 hardware components, Microsoft Windows compatible  
16 personal computer with color monitor, mouse, and  
17 keyboard

18 Software:

- 19 • Software program for taking cataloging data through  
20 keyboard interface, initiating recording, and  
21 completing recording and storing data. Such  
22 software is available from Innovative Aftermarket  
23 Systems, Inc. of Leander, Texas (assignee of the

1 subject patent application) under the SMART EYE  
2 trademark.  
3

4 The business method involves installation of a digital  
5 video camera on a wall or other suitable location in the  
6 financial closing office(s) of a vehicle dealership, where the  
7 camera can record the images of all people in the office. The  
8 camera is connected, either directly or through a wireless  
9 connection, to a personal computer via a USB port. An audio  
10 microphone is also connected to the personal computer and is  
11 located in an area on the closing desk where it can record the  
12 voices of all people speaking in the office.

13 The CD-R, CD-RW, DVD-R, or DVD-RAM drive can either be  
14 internally installed or externally connected to the computer  
15 via USB.  
16

17 The PC will have installed the customary hardware drivers  
18 for interfacing with the video camera and the aforementioned  
19 disk drives.

20 After the hardware and software installation is complete,  
21 use of the recording system is straightforward.

22 The software has clickable "buttons" which initiate a  
23 recording session, first by bringing up an on-screen form for

1 entering such items as the customer's name, address, vehicle  
2 purchased, time, date, etc. for cataloging the to-be-generated  
3 audio/video record of the transaction.

4       Once required fields in the on-screen form are complete,  
5 a "CONTINUE" (or equivalent) clickable "button" initiates  
6 actual recording. The digital images and audio stream,  
7 respectively, from the video camera and the computer  
8 microphone are recorded and stored into appropriate data files  
9 as the transaction goes on. An on-screen "COMPLETE" (or  
10 equivalent) clickable "button" terminates recording and stores  
11 the final data file with database information onto the  
12 designated storage media.

13       The subject system may be designed for two-stage storage:  
14 a first stage which goes onto the computer's regular (albeit  
15 high capacity) hard drive, followed by storage onto more  
16 indelible optical media such as CD-R, DVD-R, or DVD-RAM disks,  
17 with the DVD-R being of the highest capacity and most  
18 indelible format known to date. At the time when the data  
19 file is stored with the on-screen entered customer data, a  
20 unique file number is assigned to it, and the customer data  
21 and the file number is saved to a separate database for later  
22 identification.

23       The just-mentioned database is one which will be

1 searchable as to any field in the original on-screen form. In  
2 other words, one can search for all transactions on a  
3 particular date, by a certain sales staff member, involving a  
4 particular customer, or involving a particular vehicle or  
5 product. Any retrieved record will reflect the data file  
6 name(s) or number(s) in which these respective recorded  
7 transactions are stored. Once having the file name(s) or  
8 number(s), a user can retrieve the file(s) from the long-term  
9 storage disk(s) according to the archiving system of the  
10 dealership.

11 It should be noted that the on-screen data form can  
12 easily be customized to gather and catalog any desired  
13 information that a dealership would like to track or by which  
14 the recorded data may be cataloged.

15 The subject business method allows for a permanent record  
16 of what happened during the actual closing of vehicle purchase  
17 transaction, supplementing the actual signed paperwork. This  
18 permanent record can be used in the event any discrepancies or  
19 disputes arise in the future regarding the transaction. This  
20 record benefits and protects all parties to the transaction.

21 Having a permanent video/audio record of the actual  
22 transaction helps ensure any written documents are not  
23 misrepresented, misinterpreted, or improperly disclosed to the

customer.

Business management can monitor all transactions or spot check transactions to ensure employee compliance with fair business tactics and local, state, or federal laws. Additionally, management can use the record to improve the employee's ability to properly explain the transaction and/or complex documents and agreements related to the transaction.

Although the invention has been described with reference to specific embodiments, this description is not meant to be construed in a limited sense. Various modifications of the disclosed embodiments, as well as alternative embodiments of the inventions will become apparent to persons skilled in the art upon the reference to the description of the invention. It is, therefore, contemplated that the appended claims will cover such modifications that fall within the scope of the invention.